

Report and Recommendations for Nevada's Veterans
Prepared by the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs
Fulfilling the Requirements of NRS 417.0195
May 1, 2014

Introduction and Executive Summary: The report that follows is the result of the efforts of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (Council). It contains background on the organization and its purpose, details from a statewide veterans survey conducted by the Office of the Governor, and specific policy recommendations for the Governor. When updated and presented to the Legislature, this report will fulfill the requirements outlined for the Council in NRS 417.0195.

The Council was initially created through an Executive Order signed by Governor Sandoval in 2012. It is made up of local, state, and federal leaders throughout Nevada and is tasked with identifying ways to increase collaboration between local, state, and federal agencies and identify legislative recommendations to improve services to veterans, service members, and their families. The Council meets quarterly.

The recommendations developed by the Council at the end of this report are focused entirely on issues related to veteran employment. To paraphrase the "guiding principles" developed and embraced by the Council, employment is crucial to successful reintegration of returning service members and existing veterans, and their military skills and training should allow them to transition successfully back into civilian society. This is particularly important due to the fact that many service members have been removed from the civilian workforce for years and are therefore at a considerable disadvantage.

In addition to these principles, the Council chose to focus on employment issues for several other reasons as well. First, the report made by the Student Veterans Advisory Council developed recommendations for the education focus area of the Green Zone Initiative, while the Veterans Suicide Prevention Council developed recommendations for the wellness focus area, leaving only the employment focus area. Second, at the 2014 Veterans Legislative Symposium in Reno, Nevada, where leaders and members of the veteran community gathered to develop and prioritize recommendations for the upcoming legislative session, participants voted to make veterans licensure reciprocity the fifth priority overall, veteran hiring preferences at the county and municipal level the thirteenth priority overall, and they voted to make a general focus on veteran employment the fourteenth priority overall. Finally, Governor Sandoval signed Executive Order 2014-02, which required the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to develop employment recommendations for his consideration ahead of the next Legislative Session, which this report aims to fulfill as well.

Though the recommendations below all focus on veteran employment, individually they examine the issue from various angles. They attempt to provide

EXHIBIT L-1 - SENIORVETSPECIAL Document consists of 25 pages. Entire exhibit provided. Meeting Date: 07-09-14
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opportunities and incentives for private sector employers to hire veterans; they attempt to remove barriers to entry for public sector employment; and they attempt to improve coordination of services and service delivery as well. As with many of the reports gathered by the various veteran councils, they also reflect a deep interest in data gathering and sharing so as to measure the success of these recommendations and to develop future recommendations as well.

The Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs is proud to produce this report. As the body that developed and approved the initial four documents establishing the Green Zone Initiative, developing these recommendations is merely the next step towards achieving that initial vision. Future steps will be required as well to ensure that those who serve our country have every opportunity to successfully reintegrate upon their return.

Guiding principles: As derived from the Governor's strategic priorities, the employment objective of the Green Zone Initiative states "service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen are competitive for high quality jobs and stable employment after their transition out of service." Accordingly, the guiding principles of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs are:

- In order to become the most military- and veteran-friendly state in the nation, the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs will focus on providing ways to streamline the transition process for veterans seeking employment.
- Employment is central to the successful transition of service members and their families into Nevada communities.
- Due to their absence from the civilian workforce, the need to move often, and other factors, service members and their families face unique challenges when transitioning into the civilian workforce.
- Because of their life experience, military training, and leadership skills, veterans should be considered an enormous benefit to our workforce.

Background: In 2012, the United States had been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan for nearly a decade. Though the war in Iraq looked to be winding down, Afghanistan was quickly becoming the longest war in the nation's history. Whatever happened in either theater, the State of Nevada looked to assist in the reintegration of returning veterans through various initiatives, including the Green Zone Initiative (GZI) and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (Council).

The GZI is The Nevada Department of Veterans Services' (NDVS) main effort to marshal all available resources in the areas of wellness, education, and

employment for Nevada's veterans. It is a statewide strategic planning initiative designed to improve services to Nevada's service members, veterans, and their families, to increase collaboration among service providers, and to provide a roadmap for ways to improve the current offering of services to policymakers, non-profit funders, and other members of the statewide community. It is augmented by a statewide infrastructure, including the Council.

The Council is a statewide working group aimed at identifying statewide resources, creating efficiencies in local, state, and federal government services as well as the non-profit sector, and establishing an action plan for moving forward. The Council was originally created by Governor Sandoval through Executive Order 2012-15, and consisted of thirteen Governor's appointees: ten appointees were members of the Governor's cabinet, one appointee was the Director of the federal VA's Regional Office, one was a representative from local government, and one is a representative of the non-profit community.

Following a successful series of meetings in 2012 and 2013, the Council created by Executive Order 2012-15 discontinued and a new version created by Assembly Bill 58 during the 77th Legislative Session began. The new version has very much the same duties and responsibility as the previous version, and its duties are outlined as follows. The members of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs shall:

- Identify and prioritize the needs of veterans and servicemen and servicewomen and their families in this State.
- Study the coordination of the efforts of the Federal Government, State Government, local governments and private entities to meet the needs of veterans and servicemen and servicewomen and their families in this State.
- On or before February 15 of each year, submit a report concerning the activities of the Council during the preceding calendar year and any recommendations of the Council to the Governor and the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

The membership for the ICVA is also created in statute. A listing of members and detailed biographical information can be found in **Appendix A** of this report.

The quarterly meetings to date during the statutory phase of the ICVA began in December of 2013. The primary objective of the first meeting was to finalize and approve the report structure for the report due to the Legislative Commission on February 2014. After fulfilling the Council's statutory reporting requirement, the Council set out to approve the recommendations for this report during their March 2014 meeting. Subsequent meetings of the Council

focused on refining this report and developing legislation from the recommendations below.

The findings and recommendations for the Council's report are focused on all aspects of veteran employment. There are several reasons for this. First, the Student Veterans Advisory Council's report developed recommendations for the education focus area of the Green Zone Initiative, while the Veterans Suicide Prevention Council developed recommendations for the wellness focus area. Second, at the 2014 Veterans Legislative Symposium in Reno, Nevada, participants voted to prioritize several employment-related recommendations, including making a general focus on veteran employment the fourteenth priority overall. Finally, Governor Sandoval signed Executive Order 2014-02, which required the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to develop employment recommendations ahead of the next Legislative Session. The Council aims to satisfy all of these requirements through this report and recommendations below.

2013-2014 Veterans Services Survey: On Veterans Day, 2013, Governor Sandoval announced the launch of an online survey opportunity for service members, veterans, and their families in Nevada. The survey remained available online until April 1, 2014, and consisted of a total of 15 questions, ranging from demographic data to prioritization of veterans needs in Nevada. The total number of respondents for this survey, 312, was nearly three times the number that responded to a similar survey conducted in December of 2012, which was used as the basis for the Green Zone Initiative Environmental Scan.

The 312 respondents represented various backgrounds. Nearly 90% (275) were veterans, 4.9% (15) identified themselves as active duty service members, 2.61% (8) identified as a spouse of a veteran, and 2.61% (8) identified as neither a veteran nor a dependent of a veteran. Nearly 90% served in the Active Army, Navy Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard, with nearly 10% serving in the Guard or Reserve components, the vast majority of whom serving since the Vietnam War era. Of the respondents who answered, nearly two-thirds identified as serving in a combat or war zone.

Focusing generally on federal benefits, the survey began by asking participants about their general knowledge of the benefits for which they are eligible, which allows the State of Nevada to ascertain how well various organizations and agencies are doing in making their services known to veterans. Over half of the respondents said they knew a lot about their benefits or at least had some knowledge regarding the benefits available to them. In addition, 66% said that they actively looked for VA health care benefits, while 33% said they looked for benefits including home loans, life insurance, education benefits, or burial/interment benefits.

In order to get a better idea of some of the challenges that veterans face in obtaining their benefits, the survey also included a free response section in which veterans could identify some of the biggest obstacles they face. Some of the popular trends that were discovered in the responses include long wait times or inadequate staffing (28%), unresponsive or unfriendly customer service (18%), and that the process to obtain benefits is confusing (17%). Other trends included challenges in obtaining education benefits, dental benefits, and that the physical locations of some VA service offices are inconvenient.

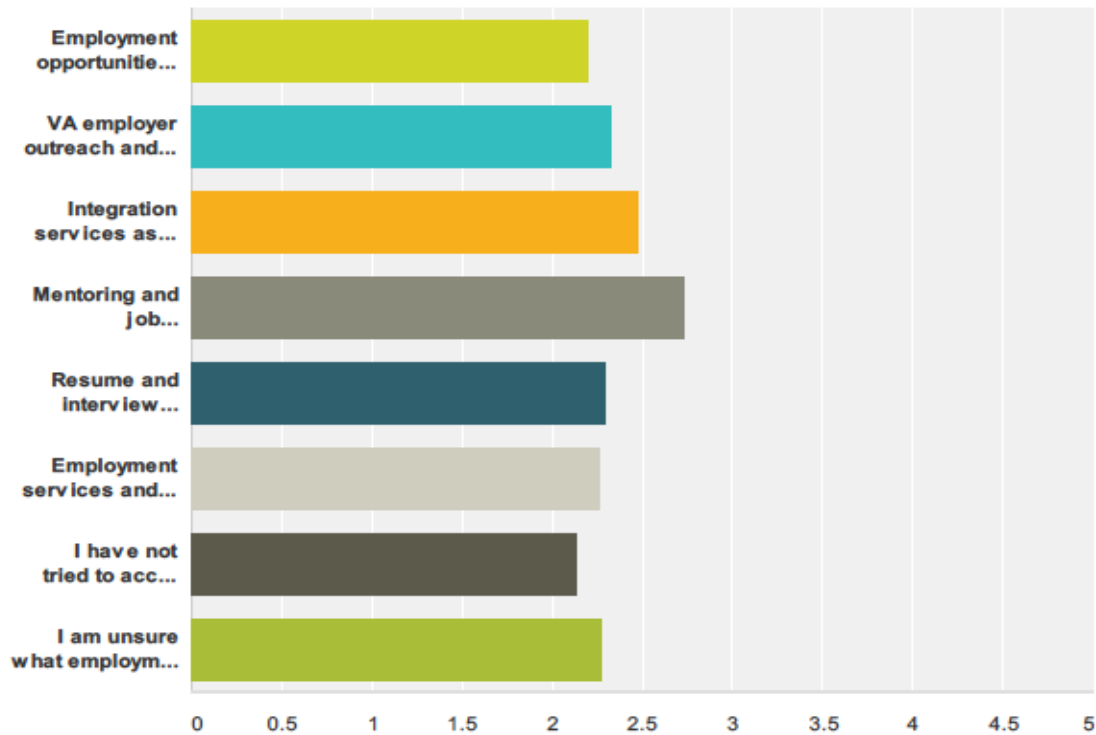
In response to a question specifically related to health care benefits, an average of 47% of the participants agreed that health care benefits for veterans are available, while 30% replied that health care was not applicable to them. This suggests that a majority of veterans who actively sought out health care benefits were either eligible for benefits or were aware that they could pursue them. However, the other 23% of the participants, or nearly one in every four, disagreed that health care benefits were available to them. This may be in part due to the eligibility requirements that VA health care has as it applies to veterans who make over the maximum annual income allowed.

A question about the availability of dental benefits was also provided on the survey, in which 80% of the participants agreed that dental benefits are either unavailable or not applicable to them. The reason for this unusually high percentage is most likely due to the strict qualifications that the VA has in place for dental benefits, which requires veterans to have a 100% service-connected disability, a documented mouth or jaw injury while in the military, or that the veteran is a former prisoner of war in order to be eligible. In addition, 26% said that the quality of dental services is of good quality, while 24% said that the quality is poor.

The survey participants were also asked to give their feedback regarding VA employment services and/or transition services that are offered in Nevada, which include job fairs, integration services for returning veterans, mentoring and job opportunities, and resume and interview preparation. When taking all of these services into account, an average of 33% of the participants said that these services were accessible, 24% said the services were inaccessible, and 43% replied "not applicable." Moreover, an average of 38% of the participants agreed that these services were not plentiful enough or were unavailable due to economic constraints. A chart depicting the individual percentages to these questions is included below.

Q9 Please describe your level of agreement with the following items as they relate to VA employment and/or transition services in Nevada.

Answered: 237 Skipped: 75



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	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Total	Average Rating
Employment opportunities are not available due to economic constraints	17.33% 39	21.33% 48	21.33% 48	4.44% 10	35.56% 80	225	2.20
VA employer outreach and job fair events are accessible	8.85% 20	31.86% 72	13.27% 30	7.96% 18	38.05% 86	226	2.33
Integration services as veterans return home are accessible	5.78% 13	24.44% 55	12.00% 27	8.89% 20	48.89% 110	225	2.47
Mentoring and job opportunities are accessible	4.48% 10	19.28% 43	22.42% 50	12.56% 28	41.26% 92	223	2.73
Resume and interview preparation is accessible	8.04% 18	29.46% 66	14.73% 33	5.36% 12	42.41% 95	224	2.30
Employment services and/or transition services are unavailable or not plentiful enough	12.44% 28	25.78% 58	13.78% 31	7.11% 16	40.89% 92	225	2.26
I have not tried to access these services	28.76% 67	18.03% 42	16.74% 39	11.16% 26	25.32% 59	233	2.14
I am unsure what employment services are available	20.52% 47	21.83% 50	21.83% 50	9.61% 22	26.20% 60	229	2.28

As the American involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan comes to an end, it is likely that there will be a drastic increase in veterans who are pursuing their education using VA benefits. An average of 47% of the survey participants indicated that they agree or strongly agree that education benefits are available to them, while 31% stated that education benefits were not applicable to them. Veterans also indicated that some of their concerns with respect to education benefits included concerns about out-of-state tuition costs (26%) as well as confusion over the specific education benefits that apply to them.

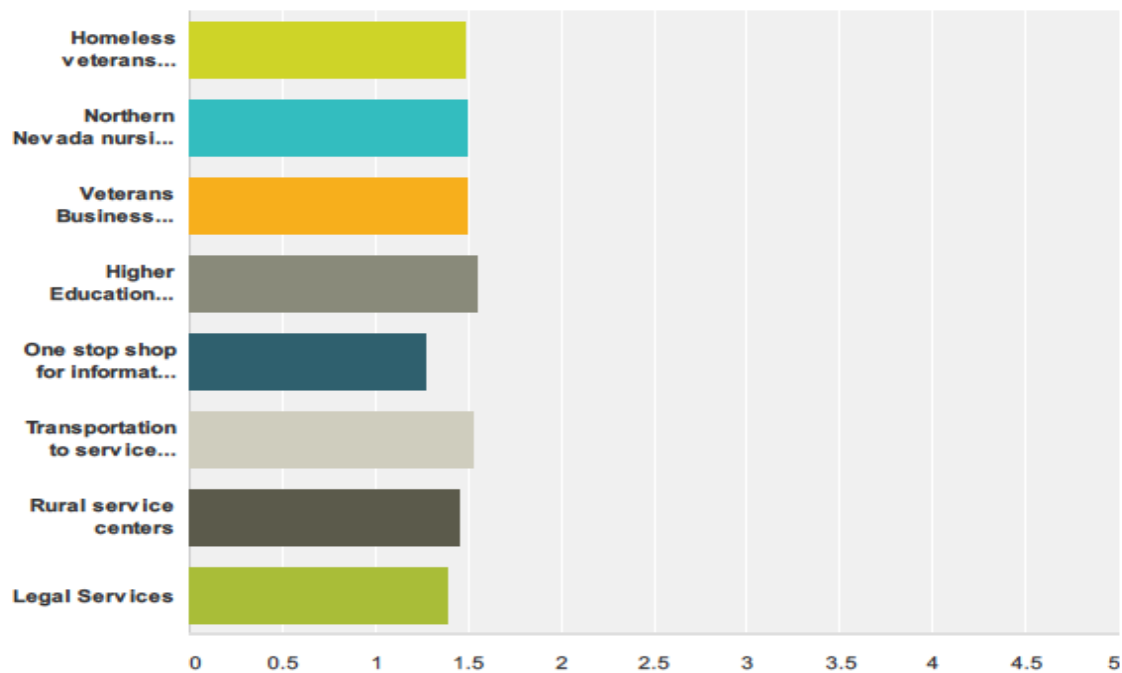
Finally, veterans were asked to respond to a number of additional resources that they thought would be most useful in the State of Nevada. By far, the resource that received the highest percentage of responses was for a "one-stop-shop" for information (76%), which suggests that veterans have difficulty in accessing available resources or obtaining information for said resources. This also agrees with other statistics found in the survey in which veterans have expressed their frustrations or confusion when it comes to obtaining veteran services and benefits.

Other services that received a high percentage of responses include legal services (61%), a homeless shelter for veterans (55%), rural service centers (54%)

and transportation to service providers (52%). The statistics and data related to this question can be seen below.

Q13 If it were possible to bring additional resources to Nevada, in your opinion, which of the items below would be most helpful?

Answered: 236 Skipped: 76



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	Most helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not necessary	No opinion	Total	Average Rating
Homeless veterans shelter	55.51% 126	29.96% 68	7.05% 16	7.49% 17	227	1.48
Northern Nevada nursing home	44.00% 99	34.22% 77	2.67% 6	19.11% 43	225	1.49
Veterans Business Outreach Center	50.88% 115	34.96% 79	4.87% 11	9.29% 21	226	1.49
Higher Education Resource Center	45.95% 102	42.34% 94	4.95% 11	6.76% 15	222	1.56
One stop shop for information about available benefits	76.52% 176	15.65% 36	5.22% 12	2.61% 6	230	1.27
Transportation to service providers	52.23% 117	32.59% 73	7.59% 17	7.59% 17	224	1.52
Rural service centers	53.78% 121	29.33% 66	5.33% 12	11.56% 26	225	1.45
Legal Services	60.96% 139	29.39% 67	3.51% 8	6.14% 14	228	1.39

Recommendations: Based on research and deliberations, the survey, and other information, the Council developed the recommendations below. These recommendations were developed in order to continue the initial progress established by the Green Zone Initiative, particularly as it pertained to employment aspects of veteran reintegration. Although the recommendations below can be seen as stand-alone items, they are intended to be considered together in order to provide a more holistic approach.

A. Changes to the Nevada Veterans Hiring Preference and Incentives Programs

Employment is a crucial element of veteran reintegration. Returning veterans have often spent two, four, ten, or more years outside of civilian employment and are often forced to start over at the entry level upon returning from their military service. There are multiple ways of addressing this issue, but two prominent approaches can come through the development of a robust "veterans preference" program, and through incentives for employers to hire veterans.

A veteran employment preference simply means that the employer, public or private, may favor a veteran when filling opportunities for employment. There are varying types of preferences, from direct hire opportunities to point

advantages when rank-ordered lists of applicants are involved. Nevada currently has a relatively limited veterans preference in statute.

Nevada's current veterans preference is limited to state employment, at least formally. As outlined in NRS 284.260, the preference is only in effect when a "list of eligible persons" is compiled to fill a position, which is often done when a test is required for the position. For those positions that require a test, a 10-point advantage is added for the applicant if he or she is a veteran with service-connected disabilities. For a veteran who does not have a service-connected disability, or widow or widower of a veteran, a five-point advantage is added to the applicants passing grade. This provision is for open, competitive examinations or a single promotional examination.

While this is a generous beginning, it only affects a very small number of job opportunities, and all within the public sector. Meanwhile, private sector employers commonly ask if they are legally permitted to implement a veterans preference with respect to their employment opportunities, or if such a preference would constitute an illegal human resources practice. Both of these challenges present opportunities for improvement.

There are numerous precedents set in Nevada, in other states, and in the federal government that provide important examples for Nevada going forward. For example, in recent years, states like Minnesota and Washington have passed legislation allowing for private sector employers to legally prefer military veterans when hiring. While the statutory language is permissive, the law change informs employers that veteran preferences are legal and helps informing the broader public of the value of hiring veterans. In Washington, the law change also means that veterans can search the state jobs portal by filtering employers who specifically wish to hire them.

In addition to these efforts in other states, the federal government also has a program known as "Veterans' Recruitment Appointment" (VRA), which serves as a federal veterans preference program. The VRA program allows for federal employers to hire veterans directly into federal positions up to grade level GS-11. For veterans meeting specific criteria—such as combat veterans, disabled veterans, honorably discharged veterans, for example—this can be a great opportunity to enter competitive federal service following service in the military.

While the State of Nevada does not have a similar program for veterans, a precedent does exist in the broader workforce and human resources arenas. Currently the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation (DETR) manages a program called the "Ready, Willing, and Able to Work" program. This program, which was created by NRS 284.327, allows for persons with disabilities to be hired directly into state positions.

The statute reads, "to assist persons with disabilities certified by the Rehabilitation Division of [DETR], appointing authorities are encouraged and

authorized to make temporary limited appointments of certified persons with disabilities for a period not to exceed 700 hours notwithstanding that the positions so filled are continuing positions." The statute further reads that "a person with a disability who is certified by the Rehabilitation Division must be placed on the appropriate list for which the person is eligible," and that "each such person must possess the training and experience necessary for the position for which the person is certified."

In addition to not having a legal mechanism that allows employers to prefer to hire veterans, the State of Nevada also does not have a way to incentivize employers to hire veterans as other states do. The federal government has established the "VOW to Hire Heroes Act," which, in addition to other provisions, provides tax credits to employers hiring unemployed veterans and disabled veterans.

Nevada has recently considered or approved legislation that, though not veteran specific, could provide a template in this area for the State. During the 77th Legislative Session, for instance, the legislature considered bill Senate Bill 172, which would provide incentives for hiring unemployed Nevadans, though not necessarily unemployed veterans. Previously, the legislature approved the Silver State Works Program, which provides up to \$2,000 in incentive reimbursement or training allowances for new employees, though, again, not necessarily for unemployed veterans.

These findings and examples were presented to the Council, which then developed numerous recommendations for the Governor and Legislature to consider ahead of the next legislative session. In accordance with the Council's guiding principles, these recommendations are intended to increase opportunities for veteran employment. Accordingly, the Council fully and heartily recommends the following:

Recommendation 1. Make it possible for private sector employers to prefer veterans and their spouses in hiring, and to provide a function that allows veterans to search for these employers through the JobConnect Website.

This recommendation calls for permissive language within the NRS to allow for employers to favor veterans when hiring. Using model legislation from other states, such as Minnesota and Washington, Nevada could easily make this change to statute. The latter piece, including a veterans preference search option on the JobConnect Website, could have a significant fiscal note so it should be considered a secondary priority.

Recommendation 2. Provide for a deduction from the private employer payroll tax for newly-hired, full-time veteran employees.

This recommendation calls for a tax incentive for Nevada employers to hire veterans in certain circumstances. New legislation would be similar to previous legislation heard during previous sessions, though this recommendation pertains specifically to unemployed veterans. It would have a fiscal impact due to the loss of payroll tax revenue to the state.

Recommendation 3. Expand "Silver State Works" benefits for companies hiring unemployed veterans.

Silver State Works is a program that provides up to \$2,000 in incentive reimbursement or training allowances for new employees. The federal "VOW To Hire a Hero Act" provides an example of how Silver State Works could be expanded to apply to veterans as well. This recommendation calls for an expansion of benefits beyond the \$2,000 incentive for veterans seeking employment.

Recommendation 4. Improve veterans' access to state employment by creating direct hire opportunities similar to the federal VRA program and based loosely on the current "Ready, Willing, and Able to Work" program.

This recommendation calls for the development of a program that would combine elements of the VA's VRA program and the State of Nevada's "Ready, Willing, and Able to Work" program to increase opportunities for veterans in state service. It is in no way intended to force hiring authorities to choose veterans over other qualified candidates, but rather, provide veterans opportunities that they do not have due to their absence from the civilian workforce. It would have a fiscal impact.

Recommendation 5. Create a veterans hiring specialist position within the Department of Administration's Human Resources Division in order to manage and facilitate veterans programs.

This recommendation is aimed to provide staff support for Recommendation 4, above. This position would be housed within the Division of Human Resources Management and detailed to manage veteran hiring programs for State employment and possibly even a veteran-friendly employer program. It would have the fiscal impact associated with the creation of a new State employee position.

Recommendation 6. Require vendors seeking to do business in the State of Nevada through State Purchasing or Public Works to self identify as having completed the online Green Zone Employer training program.

This recommendation would require that companies competing for State of Nevada contracts, either Purchasing or State Public Works, would be required to confirm that they had completed an online or in-person version of the Green Zone Employer training program, which would encourage them to employ veterans. The Green Zone Employer training program is discussed in greater detail in Section B, below. It would likely have a limited fiscal impact associated with creating the program and changing appropriate forms.

B. Changes to State Veterans Employment Program Structure

In addition to preference and incentive programs, other initiatives can also assist in improving employment opportunities for job-seeking veterans. In fact, to address a problem of such enormity, a holistic approach is required. Some of these complementing efforts could include addressing the structure of the State's veteran employment structure, developing educational opportunities for employers, and tracking data to measure success of this initiative and others over years.

Currently Nevada's veteran employment function is situated under the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation. DETR's Veterans Employment Services have veteran employment specialists at their JobConnect locations throughout the state. Though a state function provided by DETR, Veterans Employment Services is funded through a federal grant.

DETR's Veterans Employment Services include services by both Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) and the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP). LVERs are employees of the State of Nevada who are co-located in state employment offices to provide assistance to veterans by supervising all employment services to veterans. DVOP specialists are also state employees co-located at employment facilities, but who have a special focus on providing employment opportunities for service-connected disabled veterans. Services provided include job referral and placement services, job search workshops, assessment and guidance services, labor market information, among other services available to veterans and employers alike.

There is currently a national effort to relocate Veterans Employment Services programs under the state veterans services agency, the Department of Veterans Services in Nevada. Texas, for instance, was one of the first to move veterans employment programs under the Texas Veterans Commission, and by all accounts they have been able to increase employment services to veterans

in their state. The primary argument for this suggested move is that veteran services agencies have more direct interaction with the veteran community as well as with other veteran service programs. The primary argument against this suggested move is the requirement for the fiscal agency to provide detailed reports to the federal government, a function that the Nevada Department of Veterans Services does not have.

In addition to restructuring the State's employment services programs, there are also other measures that can be taken to assist veterans in successfully transitioning to employment in Nevada. Illinois has created a "Veteran Friendly Employer" program, which trains and certifies employers who wish to be "veteran friendly." In Nevada, a similar program was created thanks to a generous grant from the Nevada Military Support Alliance. Nevada's "Veteran Friendly Employer" program is called Green Zone Employer Program and was supported by Executive Order 2014-02, signed by the Governor requiring executive branch agencies to be certified as veteran friendly. The program is housed under the Nevada Department of Veterans Services.

There is also a national focus on data collection with respect to veteran employment. Though there are federal veteran employment numbers for each state, the State of Nevada does not actively collect data such as the number of veterans receiving Unemployment Insurance. This information, if collected in aggregate and shared with veteran services providers at least annually, could be crucial in tracking success of all programs outlined in this report.

Recommendation 1. Move the Nevada JobConnect Veterans Employment Services function under the Nevada Department of Veterans Services or create opportunities for increased collaboration.

This recommendation is aimed to increase outreach and service opportunities for veterans by relocating DETR's Veterans Employment Services function under NDVS or finding ways to increase collaboration through colocation. This would allow for better collaboration between the DVOPs and LVERs within the state, which would allow Nevada to come closer to providing "wrap-around services" to its veterans. There is a concern that NDVS does not have the required administrative structure to fulfill the federal requirements for hosting this function. It would have a fiscal impact.

Recommendation 2. Require the state to adopt the Green Zone Employer program as an official function of that program.

The Green Zone Employer training program is a function of NDVS, which trains and certifies Nevada employers as "veteran friendly." This program could be

housed under the State's Veterans Employment Services function, under the recommended veterans hiring specialist mentioned in Recommendation 5 of Section A, or it could be a combined effort between the two entities. Because development of the program was funded by the Nevada Military Support Alliance, and it is an outreach initiative in line with Veterans Employment Services' current function, it would not have a fiscal impact.

Recommendation 3. Require the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation to gather and share aggregate unemployment data for veterans, to include Unemployment Insurance (UI) usage, to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on a monthly basis.

This recommendation would require DETR to provide NDVS with a monthly report on the number of veterans receiving UI in order to provide baseline data for the efficacy of veteran employment initiatives in existence and developed through recommendations in various report. NDVS should also be required to use this data in their annual report, which is recommended elsewhere. Due to programming requirements, this recommendation would likely have a fiscal impact.

C. Licensure Reciprocity

Another way Nevada can help ensure employment opportunities for job-seeking veterans is through licensure reciprocity. Licensure reciprocity can mean several things. First, it can mean that a state licensing body will work to recognize military certification for transitioning veterans. Second, it can mean that state certifying boards and agencies will develop bridge programs and other mechanisms to streamline the professional transition for service members and their families.

Nevada is currently one of five states that does not have legislation providing for licensure reciprocity for military members and their families. Assembly Bill 349 was introduced during the last legislative session and it would have addressed aspects of this issue for the State. The bill failed to pass.

In order to address this issue going forward, the Office of the Governor, as well as the Department of Veterans Services, the state EMS certification body, the Board of Nursing, and the POST Commission applied for and received the National Governors Association Licensure Grant. This policy academy grant facilitates a discussion between five states and federal partners on how best to create licensure reciprocity opportunities in their states. Nevada's team chose to focus on the employment areas of Emergency Medical Technicians, Licensed

Practical Nurses, and Law Enforcement Professionals. The Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs is the "home team" for this grant, and its primary focus will be to provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on how best to improve the licensure process for transitioning veterans in these three employment areas.

To date, this grant has yielded excellent results. A partnership has been formed between the Board of Nursing, a nursing education institution, and the Department of Veterans Services to develop a pilot bridge program for veterans seeking to become certified Licensed Practical Nurses. Due to changes to statute during the last legislative session, the state EMS certification program is already in line with the national EMT registry standards, with the development of a bridge training program under way. The state's POST Commission will also be identifying bridge and licensure reciprocity opportunities for returning military members to ease transition into the civilian law enforcement field.

Finally, many state licensing bodies are not required to have veteran representation on them and they are also not required to track and report the number of service members, veterans, or family members seeking licensure through them. Additionally, many advisory boards and commissions are not required to have representatives from the veteran population on them. Addressing both of these issues would also have an impact on overall efforts to provide employment opportunities for job seeking veterans in the State.

Recommendation 1. Provide a general requirement for state licensing boards and bodies to develop licensure reciprocity opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families holding federal licenses that are not currently recognized by the State of Nevada.

This recommendation calls for permissive language allowing state licensing boards and bodies to look into reciprocity options with the federal government with respect to transitioning service members. Assembly Bill 349 from the 77th Legislative Session was a good start, but models from other states could also provide examples for improvement. Because this is intended to be permissive language, this recommended regulatory change would not have a fiscal impact.

Recommendation 2. Change the makeup of relevant state certifying boards and bodies to include representatives from the veteran community.

This recommendation calls for adding a veteran as a statutory member of select state certifying boards and bodies to help ensure that the needs of transitioning

veterans are represented. A more detailed look at this is covered in Section E, below. It would have no fiscal impact.

Recommendation 3. Change the duties of relevant state certifying boards and bodies to require them to share data regarding the number of veterans seeking and/or receiving certification or renewal if they have collected it through the application process. The information should be provided in the form of a report to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on an annual basis.

This recommendation would require select state certifying boards and bodies to capture the data listed below on their applications for licensure. It would also require that they transmit a report of that data to NDVS to be included into their annual report. Due to programming requirements, this recommendation would likely have a fiscal impact.

Example data fields:

Have you ever served in the military? Y/N

Branch(es) of Service? (Check all that apply)

Army/Army Reserve
Marine Corps/Marine Corps Reserve
Navy/Navy Reserve
Air Force/Air Force Reserve
Coast Guard/Coast Guard Reserve
National Guard

Military Occupation Specialty/Specialties?

Date(s) of Service: From (DD-MM-YYYY) to (DD-MM-YYYY)

D. Public Service Internship Program

Service members leave behind their civilian careers in order to serve their country. They also leave behind opportunities to advance during their military service, and over the last decade, many have done so during a time of war. Service to our nation in uniform is currently voluntary, but one way to recognize sacrifice and the skills and expertise attained during that time by providing

service members and veterans with opportunities for entry into civilian careers in the public or private sectors.

One way to provide access to entry for transitioning service members and veterans is through internship programs, apprenticeships, and similar opportunities. These opportunities allow people to gain experience, to become known within an industry, and even to see if a position they are seeking is the right position for them. Successful programs can be either paid or unpaid and still be effective.

Nevada currently has several unpaid and paid internship opportunities administered by agencies and the Division of Human Resource Management. The unpaid internship opportunities are available on an ongoing basis and simply need to be administered by the agency. The paid internship opportunities that exist are currently the *Career Aid I* through *IV* class and the *Public Service Intern I* and *II*.

Career Aids are engaged in performing routine clerical and support duties that allow them to gain familiarity and experience related to the classes for which they are being trained. It is important to note that these positions are not to be used for ongoing entry-level positions, but to provide progression opportunities for the next higher level in the series or transition into another class based on experience gained. While *Career Aids* are typically used in a clerical capacity, they can also be used in other occupational areas in some instances.

Public Service Interns are supervised position where a college student receives training, mentorship, and development through the completion of a variety of assignments in staff activities. *Public Service Interns* can intern in any occupational areas in State service. *Public Service Intern* positions can also be used when specific residency or experiential requirements must be met for professional certification or registration.

There is a key distinction between *Career Aids* and *Public Service Interns* that is worth noting. *Career Aids* are full state employees but entering at a trainee level while *Public Service Interns* are in undergraduate or graduate programs depending on their level. These differences provide increased opportunities for providing access to entry opportunities for transitioning veterans.

Recommendation 1. Develop the existing internship structure into a veterans mentoring program where public sector agencies work with the non-profit sector and the Nevada System of Higher Education to develop access and gain professional opportunities for veterans.

This recommendation calls for the creation of a fellowship program using Public Intern positions and working with the Nevada System of Higher Education. This

Veterans Fellowship program would select veterans who are attending master's degree programs, place them in internships with state agency leaders, and shepherd them through a policy development process that would include meetings with state, local, private, and non-profit leaders. The fellowship would culminate with the Veteran Fellows participating in the legislative process. It would have a fiscal note.

E. Board and Commission reform

Nevada currently has numerous boards and commissions in existence. These are often advisory boards for public officials with respect to certain sectors, public interests, and other state functions. In addition to providing advice to elected and appointed officials, they also provide opportunities for public engagement through their open meetings throughout Nevada.

With the exception of very few of these public bodies, all of which deal directly with the Department of Veterans Services, these bodies are not required to have veteran representation on them even though they might have veterans appointed to them or might benefit from the same. Though these bodies often generate meeting minutes, reports, and recommendations, they are also not required to share the veteran-related information they develop with the Nevada Department of Veterans Services. Changing these two aspects of Nevada's board and commission structure could dramatically increase collaboration and information sharing with respect to veterans services in Nevada.

Recommendation 1. Change the membership of identified state advisory boards and commissions to include veterans, to bring subject matter experts from other agencies onto existing veteran-related advisory boards and commissions, and to create new veteran-related advisory boards for veterans as appropriate.

This recommendation calls for adding a veteran as a statutory member of select state boards and commissions to help ensure that the needs of transitioning veterans are represented. It also calls for the creation of several new veteran-related boards. It would have no fiscal impact. Identified Boards and Commissions could include:

- *Add a representative from the State Public Works Division to the Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemetery Advisory Committees.*
- *Create the Women Veterans Advisory Committee with a member appointed to the Veterans Services Commission.*
- *Create the Student Veterans Advisory Committee with a member appointed to the Veterans Services Commission.*

- *Create Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Home Advisory Committees with a member of each appointed to the Veterans Services Commission.*
- *Add a veteran representative to State Board of Nursing.*
- *Add a veteran representative (ex officio member) to the P16 council.*
- *Add a veteran representative to POST Commission.*
- *Add a veteran representative to Mental Health Commission.*
- *Add a veteran representative to Aging Commission.*
- *Add a veteran representative to Disability Commission.*
- *Add a veteran representative to Board of Examiners for Long-term Care Facility Administrators.*
- *Add a veteran representative (ex officio member) to nine DETR Sector Councils.*
- *Add a veteran representative to Housing Advisory Board (B&I).*

Recommendation 2. Change the duties of identified state advisory boards and commissions to require them to provide a report of the veteran-related activities, findings, and recommendations to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on an annual basis.

With veterans represented on the boards and commissions listed in Recommendation 1, above, these bodies should also be required to provide an annual report to NDVS outlining their general services and their veteran-specific services. NDVS would then be required to synthesize these reports into their annual report. It would have no fiscal impact.

Conclusion: This report fulfills the Governor's requirements for the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, and a version of it will fulfill the requirements outlined in NRS 417.0195. It outlines the history of the Council, it provides detailed findings, and it identifies and prioritizes recommendations regarding employment opportunities for Nevada's veterans.

As with many reports of this nature, the Council believes that the prioritized recommendations are the most important aspect of this report. As has been written several times throughout this report, the recommendations should be considered together as a group. While any one of them would provide for improvements with respect to veteran employment, the Council believes that all of the recommendations would combine to create the most good.

No matter what happens with these recommendations in the next Legislative Session, there will be room for additional improvements in future sessions. The Council believes that the recommendations in this report are an important and logical development from the previous recommendations

developed through the Green Zone Initiative, and knows that future iterations of research, planning, and development will create opportunities for future improvements. The lasting legacy of this Council's report, then, will likely be the call for more information gathering, sharing, and synthesis in the year's ahead, as this data will be tremendously helpful in identifying trends, gaps, and needs for future veterans.

Appendix A: Member Biographies for the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs

Chair— Caleb Cage is the Director of Military and Veterans Policy within the Office of the Governor. Prior to joining the Governor's Office, Cage was the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services (now the Nevada Department of Veterans Services). There, in addition to leading the State's veteran home, veteran cemetery, and veteran service officer programs, he helped establish the State's veteran outreach and collaboration effort, the Green Zone Initiative. Before serving with the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, Cage served as a policy advisor in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, with a focus on veteran and rural issues. A Reno native, Cage spent five years in the U.S. Army, with two tours in Iraq.

Co-Chair— Colonel (Retired) Katherine Miller was raised in Reno and served 34 years in the U.S. Army. Starting as an enlisted soldier, she culminated her military service with assignments as a military police brigade commander serving in the United States and in Afghanistan and as the Commander of the Department of Defense's largest correctional organization. After retiring she taught college at the University of Maryland and the University of Nevada, Reno. She served as the Deputy Director for the Nevada Department of Veterans Services prior to accepting appointment from Governor Brian Sandoval as the agency's Director.

Member—Brigadier General William R. Burks is the Adjutant General for the State of Nevada. As Adjutant General, he is the senior uniformed Nevada National Guard officer responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting more than 4,000 Nevada Army and Air National Guard personnel. Appointed by Governor Brian Sandoval, General Burks serves as his principal adviser on all National Guard issues.

Member—Bruce Breslow was appointed by Governor Brian Sandoval as the Director of the Department of Business & Industry in November 2012. Business & Industry (B&I) oversees 14 diverse State regulatory and administrative divisions: Athletic Commission, Dairy Commission, Insurance, Employee Management Relations Board, Manufactured Housing, Financial Institutions, Mortgage Lending, Housing, Labor, Industrial Relations, Transportation Authority, Injured Workers, Business Finance and Planning, Real Estate Division and the Taxicab Authority. Prior to his appointment to B&I, Breslow served as the Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles where he pioneered innovative solutions which led to an improved customer experience. Previously, he served as the Executive

Director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects and as Commissioner and administrative law judge for the Transportation Services Agency under former Governor Kenny Guinn.

Member—James "Greg" Cox began his correctional career in November of 1981 as a Correctional Officer for the Illinois Department of Corrections. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. During his career with the Illinois Department of Corrections, he was assigned to the Logan Correctional Center, the Lincoln Correctional Center, the Pontiac Correctional Center, and the Springfield Work Camp. During his 22 years there, he held the positions of Correctional Officer, Correctional Lieutenant, Correctional Captain, Major, Assistant Warden and he became a Warden in 1998. He retired from the Illinois system on June 30, 2003. In December 2003 Director Cox joined our Department as the Warden of Southern Desert Correctional Center. He was appointed Director of the Nevada Department of Corrections in 2011.

Member—Frank R. Woodbeck was appointed Director of the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) by Governor Brian Sandoval in 2011. In this capacity, he serves as a member of the Governor's cabinet overseeing the daily operations of DETR which includes more than 1,000 staff members in several offices throughout the state. Prior to becoming director of DETR, Mr. Woodbeck served as the Director of Las Vegas Operations and Workforce Initiatives with the Nevada Commission on Economic Development (NCED). In this role, he was responsible for economic development activity in coordination with the local development authorities in southern Nevada, and for providing advice and guidance to create employment and training opportunities for new and emerging companies throughout the state. Additionally, he served in a unique cross-agency role as a strategist in workforce development with the DETR, specializing in green and renewable energy initiatives.

Member—Mike Willden has served as Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) since July 2001, first appointed by Governor Kenny Guinn, reappointed by Governor Jim Gibbons, and appointed again by Governor Brian Sandoval. He is responsible for oversight of the largest department in Nevada state government, with approximately 5200 employees and 29% of the budget. Mike has been recognized for his advocacy in human services by many organizations, including: Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Centers (2004); National Association of Social Workers, Nevada Chapter, 2005

Community Advocate of the Year; and by the Foundation for an Independent Tomorrow (2005 Citizen of Distinction).

Member—A native Nevadan, Crystal Abba was appointed by Chancellor Daniel Klaich as the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs in January 2012. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Abba was the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. She began her career with Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) in 2002 and has served in multiple positions including Assistant Vice Chancellor and Director of Public Policy. In her previous NSHE roles she worked closely with Nevada postsecondary leadership to identify and develop higher education policies and practices that meet the challenges of a changing state and the needs of its residents.

Member—James Wright's 39-year public safety career includes experience in law enforcement, fire protection, emergency management, homeland security, and emergency medical services. Before Wright's appointment as Director of the Nevada Department of Public Safety in 2013, he served as the DPS Deputy Director from 2011. Wright also served as the interim Chief of the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security in 2011 and served as the Nevada State Fire Marshal from 2006. Prior to coming to Nevada, Wright enjoyed a lengthy and successful career with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) where he retired as the Deputy Director for Fire Protection. Wright is also a veteran, with service in the U.S. Air Force.

Member—Thomas Wilczek possesses greater than 25 years of experience in defense, energy, environmental, aerospace, and construction law, management, and engineering matters. He supported numerous mission-critical programs for the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Defense, National Nuclear Security Administration, and regional and local governments throughout the American West. He managed select federal characterization and remediation programs at the Nevada Test Site, Nellis Air Force Base, Tonopah Test Range, and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. He represented the Nevada State Office of Energy in the advancement of renewable energy bills in the Nevada legislature and was registered lobbyist in previous legislative sessions.

Member—Sherry Rupert is the Executive Director of the State of Nevada Indian Commission, appointed by Governor Kenny Guinn September of 2005. On October 10, 2013, Sherry was sworn in by Governor Brian Sandoval as the first American Indian woman to be appointed a member of his cabinet. With over 20 years of tribal, public and private business experience, she possesses a strong

background in accounting, finance, business administration, tribal tourism and Indian Affairs. Mrs. Rupert is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and is past President of the Native American Chapter of the University of Nevada, Reno Alumni Association.

Member—Troy Dillard was named director of the Nevada DMV in June of 2013 after serving as interim director since November 2012. Dillard previously served as the agency's deputy director and chief of DMV's Compliance Enforcement Division. Dillard spent 15 years with Nevada's Department of Public Safety before moving over to DMV. As director of the Nevada DMV, Dillard manages a state agency with an annual operating budget of \$93.6 million and a statewide workforce of 1,150 employees. Dillard oversees the collection of approximately \$1.08 billion in revenue annually, which funds a significant portion of the state's transportation program.

Member—Edward Russell is Director of the Reno Regional Office for the Veterans Benefits Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In this capacity, Mr. Russell is responsible and accountable for administering federal benefits to approximately 260,000 Veterans and their families living in Nevada and the California Counties of Alpine, Lassen, Modoc and Mono. These services total approximately \$324 million in annual compensation benefit payments.

Member—Charlie Myers is the Chairman of the Elko County Board of Commissioners, representing District 2. First elected in November 2002, Myers has served on and led numerous boards, commission, and councils, including the Elko County Economic Diversification Authority Board, the Wildlife Advisory Board, and the Veterans Community Council for the Elko area. A graduate of Central Texas College, Myers is a retired U.S. Army Command Sergeant Major and a veteran of the Vietnam War.